BrUNIMA Bulletin No 102
NOVEMBER 1999

AT THE FIRE.

THE RUINS AFTER THE FIRE.

Price Halfpenny

Pub.d by M & B SKELT, 11, Swan St. Minories, London.

No. 38

BRITISH UNIMA CENTRE BULLETIN

EDITOR - ROBERT FOWLER

NOVEMBER 1999 NO 102

Editorial

I hope members noticed the advertisement for the editorship of the *Bulletin* in the last *Newsletter* and have been considering the proposition. The last issue I shall be in charge of will be July 2000 – two issues hence. It would be advantageous to have a successor soon so that we can work together during the intervening period to ensure a smooth transition. The job does not, of course, have to be done the way I or my illustrious predecessor, John Blundall, have done it, but it does need to be done. Would applicants please contact me and/or Ray DaSilva.

You might wish to pencil in 24 June to 2 July in your 2000 diary, these being the dates of the UNIMA congress and festival in Magdeburg (see Penny Francis' article in this issue).

There is more than enough to read elsewhere in this issue, so I shall stop here, save to offer the London Puppet Centre congratulations on its 25th anniversary and achievements, which have latterly been duly celebrated at its BAC home, particularly so on Sunday 3 October, which had DNA, Ken Haines, and Stephen Mottram on the bill.

Non-Ex Cathedra Remarks

Ray DaSilva

Our Annual Lecture, now renamed the Annual John Phillips Memorial Lecture, held on 3 October, proved to be a very successful occasion. When Dr McCormick, Chair of UNIMA Ireland, kindly agreed to speak on the repertoire of 19th-century marionettes, he expressed a wish to dedicate it to John Phillips, and it was this suggestion which prompted the BrUNIMA Committee to change the title. The subject matter this time was particularly appropriate, given John Phillips' keen interest in Victorian marionettes, and it will be printed and issued to the membership in due course.

It was pleasing to be able to welcome Hilary Phillips, and to thank her for her continued support to our organization, as well as Peter Baldwin, President of The British Puppet and Model Theatre Guild, and Peter Charlton, its Chair. There was a reasonable turn out of members and a good number of non-members. The success of the event was also due in no small measure to the kindness of the Theatre Museum in letting us use the Painting Gallery and gain entry to the museum at a reduced price. On display elsewhere in the Museum were Clowes-Tiller marionettes, formerly owned by John Phillips, and some Barnard figures. A pleasant surprise for some visitors was the elaborate "Forkbeard Architects of Fantasy" exhibition of habitable and celebratory figures, which runs until 28 February 2000.

John McCormick mentioned to me the possibility of an all-Irish Puppet Festival at Birr, County Offaly (right in the middle of Ireland), 28-30 April 2000. Perhaps we might consider a BrUNIMA party visit. Any takers?

On the same day as the lecture, the Puppet Centre was celebrating its 25th

anniversary, and the Punch and Judy Fellowship, after performing in Covent Garden, met for its Annual General Meeting, during which there was much good talk about liaison with the other puppetry organizations. This juxtaposition of events helped some who went from one to the other, but I regret that at least one Punch performer missed the lecture because he was working at the time. We can't win them all.

I should like to thank everyone who has given me support during my term of office, and wish whoever is writing in this space in the March *Bulletin* well. Both Robert Fowler and I hope that the forthcoming March and July *Bulletins* will be shared between the outgoing and incoming editor for the sake of ease of transfer. Inevitably, your new chair and new editor will have different ideas to ours, so to help both them and you, your current Committee requests that you complete the enclosed simple questionnaire and give us any opinions you have about the organization.

BrUNIMA needs to have a relook at where it is going within a changing context. Going are the days when it is considered essential to have UNIMA membership when performing at overseas festivals. There is now much more movement both ways. Various organizations and theatres in this country arrange festivals and events involving foreign puppeteers with no UNIMA involvement whatsoever. One suggestion is that we look again at UNIMA's own mission statement about "bringing people together from around the world who contribute to the development of the Art of puppetry... in the pursuit of human values ...." Let us know what you think we can do to meet your wishes and, I am sure, our new Committee will try – within our means – to reflect them.

During the past few years, I have deliberately tried to keep our focus on international issues rather than being like other UNIMA centres, which deal mainly with their own national news and concerns. This is because we have other national puppetry organizations here, and we should leave room for them. It has been suggested to me that BrUNIMA cannot just simply be a channel for international news, because most people can get all they need elsewhere, including on the Internet, which is growing to enormous proportions. On the other hand, it has been said that I worry too much, and that BrUNIMA should do whatever it wishes, regardless of what the other organizations are doing – a view which I do not share. I do believe, however, that the round-table discussions among the organizations should benefit puppeteers in the long term. My hope is that those attending will act as informed individuals, looking objectively at the overall provision of services to puppeteers and enthusiasts of this country, rather than just seeking to promote the interests of the organization which they represent.

In view of the pyrotechnic nature of this *Bulletin* I wish you a safe bonfire night and on behalf of all the Committee wish you – a little early, perhaps – a happy Christmas and New Year, which will no doubt be heralded by even more fireworks. Take care.

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A Welsh Savonarola's Bonfire of the Vanities: Puppet Pyrotechnics, Chester, November the 5th, 1772

David Powell

Browsing through some old catalogues a while ago, we were struck by the following item offered for sale by an antiquarian bookseller in 1991:

EXPLOSION AT A PUPPET SHOW
JENKINS, Joseph. The Right Improvement of Divine Judgments. A sermon occasioned by a dreadful explosion of gun-powder, in Chester. Whereby a company, assembled at a Puppet-Show, was blown up and many killed, and wounded, November 5th, 1772. Wrexham: printed & sold by Richard Marsh. Sold also by P. Broster, Chester, & by J. Eddowes in Salop. Disbound; traces of library label at head.
* Speaight's history of the puppet show does not mention this incident.
(1772) £120

Despite the lack of any mention in Speaight (we can feel the bookseller playing on our susceptibilities here as he works his way towards the price), the event has never been a totally forgotten one, certainly not to the local historians of Chester, who can find a long account of the incident in Joseph Hemingway's *History of Chester* (1831), pp 6-7, and who can likewise look at maps of the city on which the site of the explosion continued to be marked until well into the Victorian period.

The performance was taking place on Bonfire Night, 1772, in a room above a warehouse, where, unfortunately, some 800 lbs of gunpowder were stored. "The inside dimensions of the building were 40 feet by 20; none of the stories were divided into separate apartments; it was composed of a cellar 12 feet high; a warehouse 7 feet high, on the ground floor, [and the] puppet-shew room over it 11 feet high; a dwelling over this room 7 feet, and a garret still higher." So writes Hemingway, who quotes *Adams's Weekly Courant* for the human details: "A few minutes before nine o'clock in the evening, the inhabitants of the city were greatly alarmed by a loud unusual noise, attended with a shaking of the ground, which every one imagined to proceed from an earthquake. But the news soon spread, that a large number of people assembled at a puppet-show, had been blown up by gunpowder, placed in a grocer's warehouse which was under the room." The rescue operation seems to have been carried out with exemplary speed and efficiency by "the faculty" (the local body of physicians and surgeons). "It happened, that no person, man, woman, or child, but of inferior station were sufferers in this dreadful calamity. But had they been persons of the most affluent fortunes, and carried to their own homes, none could have possibly received such immediate and effectual medical assistance as was administered to all, who were admitted into the infirmary. Besides 23 dead, and 53 hospital patients, there were about 30 more in the city, who received various degrees of injury; in all, 106."

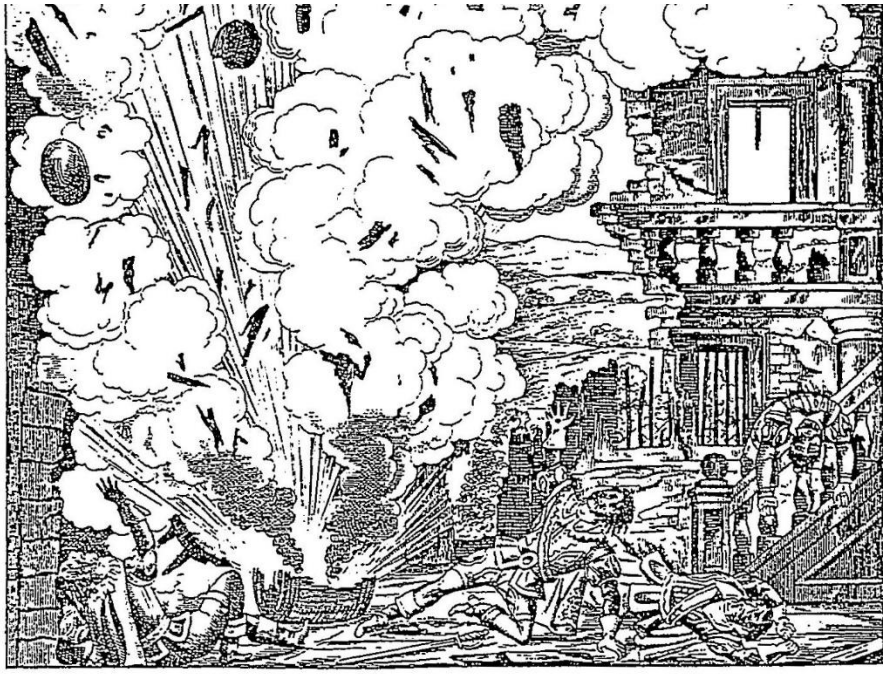
The sermon which seeks to "improve" this disaster (ie, turn it to good account) is an octavo pamphlet of 36 pages, and was originally sold for 6d. It is not an impossibly rare item, copies being recorded in the British Library, Dr Williams's Library, and elsewhere, and was popular enough to be translated into Welsh, 1773. Joseph Jenkins (1743-1819) was a Particular Baptist by persuasion, and held an MA from King's College, Aberdeen, being later awarded a DD by the University of Edinburgh. He was born at Wrexham, and had recently taken charge of "the old meeting" there. His talents would eventually take him to London: to Blandford Street in 1794, and to East Street, Walworth, from 1798 till his death. He was thus no ignorant ranter, and his measured 18th-century prose confirms that he breathed the same air as Samuel Johnson, John Wesley and Richard Challoner. Indeed, granted his premises, that puppet shows are an exceptionally sinful form of activity, and that dying suddenly and unprepared in the middle of one, with no opportunity for

repentance, is thus highly dangerous for the immortal soul of the person concerned, everything that he says is well and soberly argued.

This is not the place to debate the second of these premises; as to the first, let Jenkins speak for himself: "The English Theatre is the School of Satan; it consists principally of ... *lewd turns*, or *double entendre* .... Those Plays which are most approved of, and Writings which are most acceptable to the *polite World* (VIZ. Swift Sterne &c.) are full of those *indelicate double Meanings*.... And the Puppet-Show performances are still more vile: Tis well known that they are chiefly made up, of low wit and indecency, obscene jests, profaneness and mockery of matters most solemn and serious. Such, if Fame says true, was the conduct of this very Puppet-Show, of which the Gun-powder made a fatal conclusion."

Where Jenkins departs from the modern reader for good and all is in wishing that the victims of the disaster had rather been spending their time in an orgy of sectarian bigotry suitable to the day in question: "A company of unthinking Creatures were met together; for what? Not to serve God – Not to Worship the Most-High – Not to seek the Salvation of their Souls, – Not to bless the Lord, that, on the *fifth of November*, he saved the King and Parliament of ENGLAND, from being blown up by Gun-powder, thro' the Malice and cruelty, of our Popish Enemies: they were alas! not met together for these, or any other *good* purposes; but (sad to think of!) were met to see a Puppet-Show, – to sport themselves with Sin, – to laugh at profaneness, – to serve the Devil."

Certainly puppet shows do not stand alone as objects of the preacher's disapproval, but they do appear (for reasons already stated) to be almost at the apex of it:



"Would you like to go from a *Card-Table*, immediately to a *Bed of Death*? – Would you like to go from a *Horse-Race*, into *Eternity*? – Would you like to go from a *Play-House*, to the Bar of *Almighty God*? – or from a *Puppet-Show* to the *Judgment-Seat of Christ*? No, you would not. – And if these appear unwelcome exercises to *die* in: sure they are improper to *live* in; as we know not at what moment we may die."

His severity in this matter actually seems to exceed that of his spiritual forebears. For, during the Puritan ascendancy of the 1640s and 1650s, did not puppet shows manage to evade the general ban on theatrical performances? But Jenkins is convinced that there has been a decline in austerity since that period: "We live in a Day of great declension, luke-warmness and conformity to this World. – Not only is Religion rejected by the openly prophane; but its Interests are wounded and betrayed, by too many of its professed friends. – Hence many an indulgence, which our Pious Ancestors conscientiously refrained from, is now thought mighty harmless and innocent. – They are not indeed pleaded for, as positively commendable; yet are maintained not to be absolutely unlawful: They are supposed rather, to lie in the middle; to bear a kind of indifference; as if there were some actions, neither pleasing nor displeasing to God; And

Scene from Webb's Model Theatre sheets:
Guy Fawkes, or The Gunpowder Treason

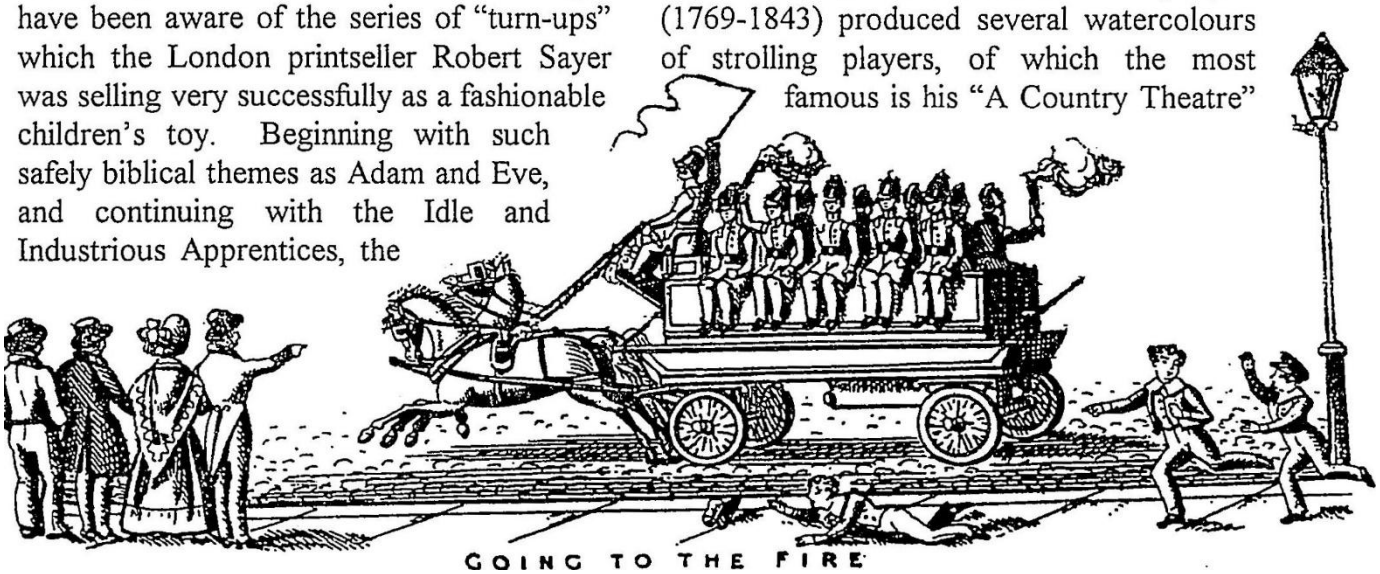
as a good Man [John Witherspoon] expresses it, 'by this method of arguing, it has come to pass, that half those practices are not thought Sins, by the professing world now, which were thought Sins an hundred years ago.'"

Nor does Jenkins seem to feel serenely confident about the leisure activities of his own congregation: "It is no improper question, and I beg leave to put it, to each of you in this assembly, 'Which of you, my friends, would *now* like to have been at *this* Puppet-Show'; Such wicked diversions many of you have taken pleasure in. With pity, have I seen you flocking to them; but suppose you had been there, when the Gun-powder blew up the house, and the people therein? How would you like to have shared in the distress? What if while *you* (in *Wrexham*) were viewing the impious Show, some awful disaster had happened to *you*, as happened in *Chester*? What if the house had fallen upon you? What if the devouring flame had seized it, and destroyed you? Is it a place that a Man would chuse to die in?"

Of course, Jenkins was right to be worried. He was able to look back 120 years into the past, and to have misgivings, but if he had been able to look forward 120 years into the future, he would have glimpsed the 1890s, the decade not for nothing known as the "naughty nineties," in which the puritanical resistance to theatre-going and most other forms of pleasure-seeking largely evaporated, never to return. And, even without powers of clairvoyance, he might have been aware of the series of "turn-ups" which the London printseller Robert Sayer was selling very successfully as a fashionable children's toy. Beginning with such safely biblical themes as Adam and Eve, and continuing with the Idle and Industrious Apprentices, the series had thrown off all caution and gone to the pantomimes of Drury Lane and Covent Garden for inspiration. And no. 14 of the series, published only six months before the explosion at Chester, had for its subject "Punch's Puppet Show" at Bartholomew Fair. Was this a fit thing to put in the hands of Christian children? Many people evidently thought it was, for the turn-up was highly popular, and remained in print for many decades, accidentally giving the modern inquirer his best glimpse of an unpretentious English puppet show of the period, perhaps similar to the one witnessed at Chester, and having definite points of comparison with the Burwell performance of 1727, notably the apparently inconsequential mélange of incidents and the preliminary conjuring.

In fact, the earlier disaster was not unknown to Jenkins, who calls the place "Barnwell" and quotes an account of the "hay-stack" incident from an unnamed source. Despite the fact that the ostler did not make his confession till his death-bed of 1774, doubts had obviously been long felt about his actions: "A Man sought admittance to the Show, but could not obtain it. – And (whether in attempting to climb the Hay-stack with a light in the hand, or whether as has been said through malice) he set the Hay on fire; and immediately the Barn was in flames."

Although the Sayer turn-up is our best illustration of English puppetry of this period, it does not quite stand alone. The artist and art-journalist William Henry Pyne (1769-1843) produced several watercolours of strolling players, of which the most famous is his "A Country Theatre"



GOING TO THE FIRE

(sometimes referred to as "Macbeth in a Barn"), which was made into an aquatint in 1788. But his "Puppet Show," first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1790, is less well known, though in 1953, when the picture was still in private hands, it was included in an Arts Council exhibition of "British Life," and it is now owned by the Huntingdon Library, California. It does not obviously depict a puppet show at all, but rather a fit-up proscenium, of a size suitable for human actors, erected in a private room and watched by a small but not very select audience. Between audience and proscenium are a conjurer (again!), with a grotesque merry-andrew (the conjurer's stooge?), a musician in motley attire (as in the turn-up), and a ragged servant attending to one of two hanging chandeliers. One has to look very hard for anything like puppets, but in a recess to one side of the proscenium a small figure hangs by a rope in the middle of various other gear, and on a shelf above it is what looks like a procession of wooden soldiers attached to a ground piece. Just behind the proscenium another figure is hanging, together with a drum. The figures with ropes attached to their heads immediately recall similar figures in two of Hogarth's satirical prints: "A Just View of the British Stage" (1724) and "Credulity, Superstition and Fanaticism"(1762). But are these stray items enough to justify the title? Even the "Macbeth" picture has its drum hanging behind the proscenium, and on a nearby shelf a row of figures on a board, possibly for representing the apparition of Banquo's royal descendants in Act IV. Was the "puppet show" of the later picture actually a mixed entertainment of conjuring, puppets, and live acting, such as McPharlin thought he had found evidence for in colonial America? Or is the title merely metaphorical? At all events it gives us a very vivid glimpse of a country performance in an improvized setting, and brings us very near to a visualization of the circumstances in which our pair of disasters took their courses.

[A fuller account of the Burwell fire, by Ray DaSilva, appears in the current issue of *The Puppetmaster* – editor]

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Information about old maps of Chester, communicated to us by Mrs Esther Williams, Chester Archives

LAWRENCE & SON,
Firework Artists, 1896
Large or small Pyrotechnic Displays fitted up & fired.
Shops supplied with Toy Fireworks.
The Grandest Displays fired in Plymouth, at Hospital Fetes, Home Park, June 27-29th, 1896.
CATERERS for AMUSEMENTS, including:—
The grandest Punch & Judy Show on earth.
Phonographs, Dissolving Views, Mechanical Targets, &c.
For Particulars and Testimonials write to Lawrence & Son,
54, King Street, Plymouth.
228

"Of an extraordinary and beautiful description"

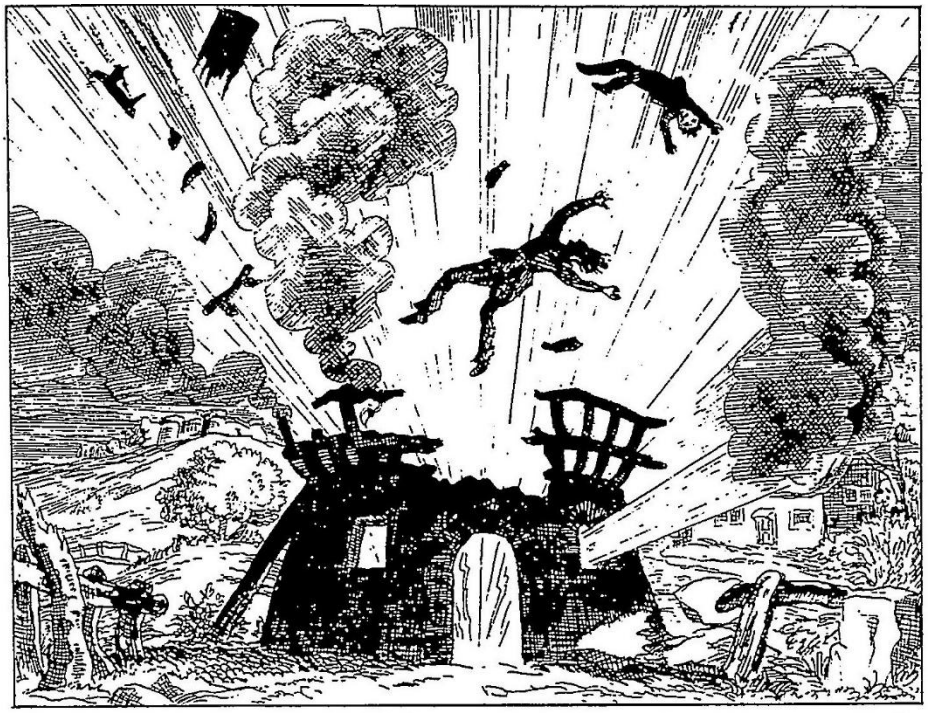
Fireworks, Puppets, and Jacks of All Trades

It is not at all surprising that the Lawrences should have cropped up during John McCormick's BrUNIMA Annual John Phillips Memorial Lecture "Nineteenth-Century Marionettes: The Plays They Played." He pointed out that to make a living, old-time puppeteers (as well as, of course, some contemporary ones) often engaged in other branches of entertainment, and, although not actually mentioned during the lecture, fireworks, as the above notice makes clear, was one such adjunct.

Readers of the *Western Morning News*, 10 March 1863, would have learned just how dangerous fireworks could be from the article entitled "Awful Explosions and Fire in Plymouth: Loss of Six Lives, Injury to Other Persons." "The cause of this appalling accident was owing to the nature of the business carried on by Mr Morris Lawrence and his sons. He appears to have been a clever pyrotechnist, and as such very extensively patrocised [sic] at this time, when his trade is in such demand." An unusually large stock of fireworks was on the premises in preparation for the celebration of the marriage of the heir to the throne of England. The explosion took place at a house in King-street West (otherwise known as Stonehouse-lane), Plymouth, and the immediate victims included Mr Morris Lawrence the elder and Morris Lawrence the younger. "The cause of this loss of life is unknown. The consequence was that the Lawrences were making fireworks when the explosion occurred. The surviving son thinks that while they were asleep some of the material ignited – either the red fire as it is called or the detonating powder." The "melancholy occurrence," was observed by Sergeant Marsh of the Plymouth borough police force: "He together with Constable Helson and a supernumerary was going through King-street at 25 minutes past 2 o'clock yesterday morning when, within 20 yards of the ill-fated house, they were startled by the sound of a tremendous report – as from a place of heavy artillery. The roar was heard at a considerable distance. The bursting of flames from several parts of the house at once informed the police of the nature of the calamity. The sight is described as being of an extraordinary and beautiful description. From each window shot forth hundreds of rockets, squibs and other pyrotechnic preparations, leaping, flying and exploding with an inconceivable rapidity and a loud roar. It was a firework display which brought swift death upon six persons, and bringing dreadful misery on many others." The article ends: "The Lawrences were well known throughout the two counties. They were exceedingly industrious people, and as the widow has now lost not only her little property, but the present means of support: the charitable have a sad case claiming their sympathy." An appeal was indeed immediately launched on Mrs Lawrence's behalf by the Reverend GR Prynne.

The inquest, held 11 March (the death toll by then had risen to nine, including Charles Lawrence), reports that the business carried on at the premises by Mr Lawrence had been "illicit" (an application for a license to make fireworks having been turned down): According to the coroner (as reported in detail in the next day's WMN): "Had he [Mr Lawrence] now been living he would have

been charged at a criminal bar for the offence committed, and he had no doubt but that the jury would have returned a verdict of manslaughter." The jury did return such a verdict against Morris Lawrence the elder.



The last witness at the inquest was WH Lawrence, who, while still suffering from the "effects of the vapour" which had killed his brother Charles, refused to leave the court and take himself to hospital as advised by the coroner. Many years later he contributed a "portrait" of himself to a temperance paper called the *Caravan*. WH Lawrence is introduced as an "art photographer and amusement caterer; a firm total abstainer, persevering, and industrious...." After describing how he lost his father and two brothers at the age of 17, Lawrence continues: "The following year [1864] I bought two caravans and a model of gold mines, part of which had been smashed up with a chopper, only the pieces remaining; failing to find a mechanic to repair it, with scarcely any tools, I put the whole in perfect repair, there being between 40 and 50 figures with their picks, shovels, washing machines to make and set in motion with other models.

"In 1873 I took an engagement with Bullock's Marrionettes on tour through America. I took a second engagement with McDonough and Hearnshaw's American Marrionetts, making the principal figures in the show.

"I learnt wood carving on the road, making small heads for our models with my penknife; so little things spring into greater. I know many trades, but was never taught any but the making of fireworks. I have to thank travelling for my knowledge, as necessity compelled me to do many things which could not be conveniently done elsewhere. This makes the traveller a handy man. I married in Philadelphia, returned to England in 1874, and was the maker of Mr. J. Holden's Marrionetts and American tricks that was shown before the principal crowned heads throughout the world; also the Lawrence Brothers' Anglo-American Marionetts and travelled and exhibited the same for a number of years. I am the manufacturer of the grandest Punch show in the world."

"After the loss of my wife, being tired of travelling, I opened a grocery business in Plymouth, and two years later married the daughter of Mr. Josh Crossland." He concludes by preaching to the – one imagines – converted on the virtues of abstaining from "intoxicating drinks."

A *World's Fair* obituary entitled "Lawrence – a Man of Many Parts" refers to Edwin Lawrence – "actor, author, lecturer, and inventor of many novelties that from time to time he introduced into Showland.

Final scene from *The Miller and His Men* – Skelt

He and his brother John [younger brothers of WH] were well known as the cleverest marionette performers that the West – and perhaps the whole country – has ever seen." Another source speaks of "Mr Edwin Lawrence's fine show which must have cost a small fortune. Many of the fine scenic effects, acts, drops, waterfall, etc., were left at Burton-on-Trent, while the magnificent carved and gilded proscenium that was once the front of the famous marionette theatre eventually found a home as a proscenium for a moving picture screen. What eventually happened to the marionettes themselves I do not know." The activities of Edwin Lawrence included Lawrence's travelling cinematograph show: Lawrence's Empire Theatre presented moving pictures, marionettes, and sketches on tour. However, the show, playing small towns, did not fare well and was eventually purchased from Lawrence (in 1912) by a Mrs Annie Holland.

Edwin Lawrence had three sons and three daughters. Quoting again the afore-mentioned obituary: "His eldest son Edwin, as 'World's Fair' readers are aware, is an exceedingly clever stage artiste, and as recently as last summer appeared at the Plymouth Palace Theatre in a revue." John Phillips used to tell me how difficult it was to identify the individual members of the various, often large, show business families. I now have an inkling of this. John in fact took upon himself this task, inter al, of distinguishing family members in "A Survey of Victorian Marionettists," *The Puppetry Yearbook*, Volume 3. (One of my purchases in Prague this September was a small bundle of early Loutkář ("L'unique revue spéciale dans la République tchécoslovaque et dans le monde entier," as it proudly proclaimed on the inside cover). The June 1927 issue included, as a pull-out, an annotated chart of the highly ramified family tree of the Kopeckýs in commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the death of that most illustrious of Bohemian puppeteers, Matěj Kopecký. A similar visual aid for the Bullochs, Holdens, Lawrences etc would not come amiss.)

Readers who have seen Vietnamese water puppets will know fireworks are an exciting part of that highly visual entertainment. There are also special Japanese firework puppets which form part of an elaborate spectacle which involves palaces going up in smoke. The programme for the UNIMA Festival in Japan in 1988 has a company called Tsunabi, whose show is referred to as "Traditional Puppetry Performance in Iberaki." "Following an introduction, the show will consist of string puppets moving their bodies and limbs on a rope stretched above the heads of the audience, against the night sky illuminated by a display of special fireworks. Obari Matsushita style SANBON TSUNABI was devised by Matsushita Iwami-no-kami, the master of Obari castle, as a means of celebrating victory in battle. The technique has been preserved since the 15th century as a traditional art in Ina Village, Tsukuba-gun-Iberaki prefecture. Iwami-no-kami, who was a famed explosives expert, devised the technique himself."

India has a festival, Dusshera Mela, celebrating the triumph of good over evil which culminates in the burning of a huge effigy of ten-headed Ravana after flaming arrows shot by Rama set off crackers packed inside. (See *The UNESCO Courier*, December 1967, for an illustrated account, including excellent cover picture.) However, you do not have to travel to the Indian subcontinent to experience this, for BrUNIMA members Neil Canham and Sue Leech of Cornelius and Jones, operating under the name of *pa*-Boom, have manifold ways of working with fireworks. Collaborating with the local Asian Arts Council and the local authority in Nottingham, they were commissioned to construct a 13-metre-high effigy of Ravana. Working with the local Asian community and members of the AAC, they constructed the figure with timber, bamboo, and paper, employing traditional Indian techniques. The Ravana figure was laced with fireworks and

burnt on the night of 24 October. A photograph of a previous incarnation/ incineration of the ogre king of the Ramayana epic, in which his city is torched by the victorious invading monkey army, led by Hanuman, shows it to be a splendid pyric spectacle. Earlier the same month the "myth" of Milton Keynes had been exploded by the *pa*-Boomers with a specially commissioned display blowing up five "concrete cows" for the gala opening of the new Milton Keynes theatre.

Guy Fawkes is far from alone, then. And one could go on: Valencia, for example, has the Las Fallas spring festival (dedicated to St Joseph), where giant effigies are burnt (shown on Michael Palin's Hemingway travelogue). But a final stop might be *Animations*, June/July 1998, where there is an interesting 2-page article (see also the back-cover photograph) on the Fire and Paper Theatre of Grzegorz Kwieciński, vice president of Polish UNIMA. "Fire remains the main means of expression in the Fire and Paper Theatre. Fire has a special status here. It plays the role of an actor...." "The presence of fire in the performance suggests associations with a ritual. It is so because fire evokes experience of a more emotional than intellectual nature. It transcends matter and animates it – makes it more spiritual in a way."

Thanks to Terry Fitzgerald for the photocopies of the WMN articles plus the temperance sheet, which arrived opportunely in the office and sparked off this hasty attempt to fuse together various material on this topical theme in the light of David Powell's existing combustible contribution.

A Suggestion

Puppeteers wanting to introduce fireworks into their performances, but who are hampered by fire regulations or simply want to play safe, should not dismiss projected effects. The 19th-century Magic Lanternists discovered that by revolving one slide on top of another they could obtain patterns resembling explosions. For more up-to-date technology, there are many useful Rosco gobos (metal slides for theatrical projectors, some illustrated on this page), which are obtainable from most theatrical suppliers.

A Bit More (Grim) Genealogy

The circus and variety performers Vesta and Ashton died in a plane crash 7 June 1999. Vesta (Audrey Grimaldi) was born in Nottingham in 1917. She was a descendant of the pantomime clown Joseph Grimaldi (1778-1837) and also claimed a distant relationship to the Grimaldi family of Monaco. (See obituary in *The Independent*, 21 7 99). Members will be familiar with the commemoration of Mr Punch in St Paul's, Covent Garden, each May, but may not know that there is an annual service for "Joey" held at Holy Trinity, Dalston, the "clowns'" church.

The Puppeteers of America Festival of the Millennium Seattle 1-7 August

Glyn Edwards

Where do you start to review a puppet festival where some 800 puppeteers from one organization have gathered on one site from all parts of one vast country for a week-long thrash comprising some 24 major puppet productions, 100 puppet workshops plus a full complement of fringe receptions, events, cabarets and general partying? I'll start with the venue. The University of Washington in Seattle is home to some 35,000 students and 12,000 staff and is thus the size of a small town. During the vacations it hosts a number of conferences and events, so the chances of taking a wrong turning and finding yourself not in the workshop of your choice but in, say, Math Camp 99 (my personal dread) were high. Fortunately, the oft-despised practice of wearing identity tags which proclaim your details reduced this risk, however, and led to all manner of micro-seminars in the lifts (sorry, elevators) when your fellow passengers all proved to be puppeteers from somewhere or other. Being a workshop leader, I was grateful to be spared the need to wear a Festal Virgin badge marking me out as a first-time attender.

With breakfast served from 7.30 (American breakfast, that is, by which standards the legendary "Full English" would rank as a side dish and a "Continental Breakfast" would count as not being served) and final time being called in the nightly "pub" at around midnight, the rest of each day was given over to puppetry (and two more substantial meals). Between breakfast and lunch came the chance to attend two workshops. The range included Sunday School Puppets and Videotape, TV Puppetry from the Inside Out, Basic Ventriloquism, Art of The Scarf Marionette, Directing Puppet Theatre, Balloon Puppets, Puppetry and Language Arts, and Hello Van Gogh! Art With Puppets. It was, as they say, an eclectic mix, to which Ray DaSilva contributed a session on Fettig Figures and I contributed a beginners and an advanced session on British Punch and Judy. UNIMA-USA hosted a symposium entitled Building On Tradition (in which Martin Bridle took part) and also hosted a reception at which overseas performers were welcomed. Ray DaSilva spoke at this and pledged the goodwill and support of BrUNIMA to our US colleagues.

Afternoons and evenings were given over to watching the main performances. This year there was a strong British presence, for not only was a Punch and Judy Faire held on the final day, but programmed into the Festival were Freehand Theatre with "Norman's Ark," Hand-to-Mouth with "Piggery Jokery" and Robert Poulter with "Black Bart's Last Breakfast." If I omit reviewing them here it is purely for reasons of "too close to homeness" in an article that is necessarily superficial. From the rest of the festival (programmed by Stephen and Chris Carter) a few of my personal favourites were the Oregon Shadow Theatre's musical retelling of "Thumbelina" as the story of a sixties flower child; "The West Gate," the first show created in the USA by Yang Feng with his daughter Yang Xie Zheng and featuring their incomparable manipulative skills with hand puppets; the delightful "Walidad the Grasscutter" by Puppetmongers, the brother and sister team of Ann and David Powell from Ontario, whose gentle storytelling with puppets was a gem of style, wit and direction; and "Sleeping Beauty" by Paul Mesmer Puppets of Missouri – billed quite simply and accurately as "a one-man tour-de-farce." Object Theatre, Theatre of Animation, and

various experimental trends being explored in European puppetry were largely absent in a festival in which, for the most part, puppets that met the common perception of what a puppet looks like performed linear narrative tales on a variety of stages designed to accommodate them. A week of this provided a useful perspective from which to reflect on the perennial questions of "What is a puppet and what constitutes puppetry?"

Nights were taken up by a series of hospitality events provided by the various regional puppetry guilds present at the Festival and included a variety of semi-impromptu cabaret performances and happenings (I seem to recall a record-breaking, 700-foot-long sock puppet threading its way through one bar). Fifteen hours of puppet-related events a day for a week (did I mention the Puppetry Store, the video showings and the exhibitions yet?) and culminating in a gala evening performance/ awards ceremony followed by a party and dancing, this festival is in a class of its own. Acclaimed Canadian puppeteer Ronnie Burkett, writing in the current issue of *Animations* about returning to his first PofA Festival for 18 years, says "Within an hour of registering at the Festival desk I found myself on a boat cruise crammed with puppeteers, and in the midst of a gaggle of new friends who I felt I had known my entire life. They spoke the language, they knew the names, their information filled in the missing pieces of mine. At 2:00 a.m. I was wandering the hallways looking for a party, just to stay awake and to keep the puppet chat going. I was hooked. I was home."

It's probably just as well the PofA only holds a Festival every *other* year!

[Mickey Aronoff, our former therapy consultant, who has now returned to the States, writes of the Puppeteers of America Festival: "There were so many people from England, it felt like Old Home Week. I got properly nostalgic and began kicking myself even more for letting my permanent residency lapse" – editor.]

Seattle Sidetrips

Ray DaSilva

In addition to all the high-jinks going on at the University campus, festival registrants wishing for a respite, to see the countryside or simply extend their knowledge, could choose to go on various party excursions.

On the first night, two boatloads of puppeteers cruised around Puget Sound, through Seattle harbour and out to Tillicum Village on Blake Island. In the enormous Indian cedar longhouse we dined on smoked salmon and enjoyed a performance, "Dance on the Wind," an Indian story with traditional native Indian masks.

On the Monday, Joan went off with a party led by Lettie Schubert to a beautiful doll museum at Bellvue, just outside Seattle, while I was sorting through books at the Puppetry Store. Later in the week a couple of busloads of us went about 40 miles north to a museum at Everett, where part of Alan Cook's enormous puppet collection was on exhibition. This particular selection featured Len Ayres, who lived in Everett 1901-10 and became famous for his Mantell Manikins, which, according to McPharlin, had a seven-year tour of Europe in the 1920s. This poster snippet indicates that they came here.

On display was their staging and several trick marionettes. The whole exhibition was quite wonderful. I was thrilled to see, for the first time, figures from many old American performers whom I knew by name only – Tony Sarg, the Tattermans, Frank Paris, the Turnabout Theatre – as well as familiar figures by Bil and Cora Baird, the Beatons, Martin Stevens, and many more.

As usual the Puppeteers of America did us proud. Joan and I have been to and performed at a number of these festivals. This year, it was a particular pleasure to be able to share the experience with so many British friends. Roll on Tampa, Florida, 8-14 July 2001.

Puppets At The City Of London Pestival

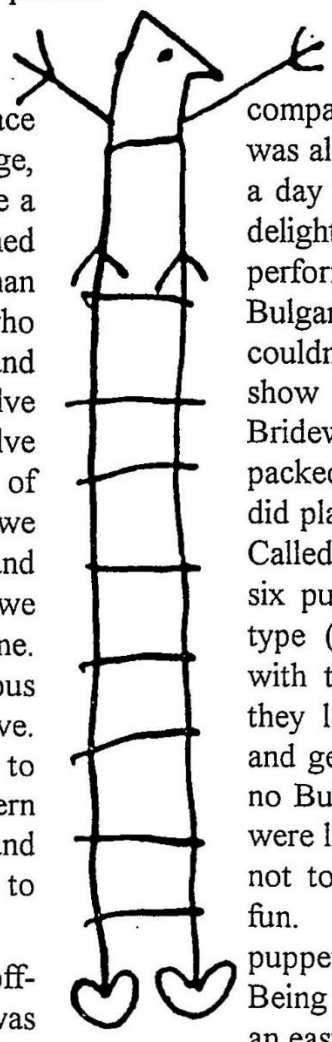
Peter Charlton

I was fortunate enough to see Teatr Naku on their last – almost impromptu – visit to London, when they performed at the Little Angel Theatre. I was very impressed and so hurried along to the Bishopsgate Library to catch their performance of "Circus Naku." It was important to be in good time, for the Festival programme said there were only 12 seats available for each of the three performances. We were ushered into the upstairs hall promptly at 1.05 PM and found ourselves in a largish room with a small circus tent and twelve chairs. Why only 12? There was certainly room enough for far more. [The Russian satirists Ilf and Petrov wrote the novel "The Twelve Chairs," in which treasure is hidden in one of the chairs, each of which is sold to a different party, though I cannot comment on the precise relevance – editor.]

Mystic music played and a walking-booth sidled into place alongside the "smalltop." A strange, Eastern-looking booth this, not unlike a giant yashmak. The curtains opened and we were greeted by a gypsy woman complete with crystal ball who immediately counted the house and satisfied herself that there were twelve of us. She spoke mysteriously of twelve people, twelve doors and gave hints of individual fortunes ahead. Then we were invited inside the circus tent and promised untold delights, which we were enjoined not to disclose to anyone. Once inside the "top" it was obvious why the audience was limited to twelve. The tent was full, but not it was to prove – for me at least – with Eastern promise. After this ingenious and tantalising beginning, they then failed to deliver.

What followed was certainly off-beat, and not without charm, but it was often pretty ordinary. The theme at first seemed to be physical disformity, or at least abnormality. The dulcet tones of Gene Kelly were accompanied by a man wearing a straw boater; as he sang and danced we discovered he had no lower limbs and had to boat himself around in the hat for his dance routine. He was followed by a Carmen Miranda type who lacked both arms and a decent choreographer. Then we had a song sung by a pair of giggling Siamese twins followed by a trapeze routine by two mermaids. Nice idea; I couldn't help feeling that some Victorian showman must surely have thought of that one! My favourite act was two tiny (about 2" high) figures that did some basic acrobatics and dance. Not breath-taking, but certainly very charming.

Sadly, the show ended with an embarrassingly awful clown act. Was it meant to be awful? Was this some satirical comment on circus clowning? Hard to say, but it sent me out with that "Oh dear!" feeling.



The Bulgarian puppet company, Perpetuum Mobile Theatre, was also playing at the festival, but on a day when I was working, so I was delighted to be invited to see them perform at a special reception at the Bulgarian Embassy. Obviously, they couldn't perform the "black light" show they were presenting at the Bridewell Theatre (I am told they packed that place), but the piece they did play was full of fun and ingenuity. Called "We the Sparrows," it featured six puppeteers each working a junk-type (sorry, Chris) bird puppet and with them we followed the birds as they learned to fly, explore the sky and generally experience life. Having no Bulgarian at all, many of the gags were lost on me, but it was impossible not to be captivated by the sense of fun. There were times when the puppeteers out-acted the puppets. Being in vision with the puppet is not an easy technique to acquire. The two Teatr Naku puppeteers have it

wonderfully mastered – absolutely still, impassive faces and bodies. Perpetuum were totally the reverse, though they had obviously been directed to do this. You do sometimes find yourself watching the puppeteer rather than the puppet. One of them, I think it was Doriana Galabova, had really mastered her puppet – a superb character.

It was a most enjoyable evening, enhanced after the show by a chance to talk to some of the company and sip the odd glass of Bulgarian red.

Recent UNIMA Activity in Brazil and Croatia

Penny Francis

The 70th anniversary of UNIMA has been celebrated in many parts of the world this year, and one of the most colourful celebrations took place in the pretty town of Olinda, near Recife, in the northeast of Brazil, in June. This region is where the first Portuguese colonizers stepped ashore with their all-conquering firearms. The Executive Committee of UNIMA and some members of the Board of the World Encyclopedia of Puppetry Arts (WEPA) were invited and came rather more peacefully to hold their meetings there and to attend the festival organized by the presiding spirits of Magda Modesto (a member of the Executive and a former vice-president of UNIMA) and Fernando Augusto Gonçalves, a respected Mamulengo player of the company So-Riso and the festival director. The Mamulengo is a glove-puppet folk tradition which still retains its vitality. It differs from the European in that there is no one protagonist or hero, but features many stereotypical characters from society (business man, politician, peasant, priest) in various ridiculous or satirical situations. The female characters are frequently there for their sexual potential, so it is as macho as the Punch show once was, and the whole performance depends on a great deal of verbal humour and physical suggestiveness.

Fernando Augusto has created a beautiful theatre with indoor and outdoor playing spaces, which had its grand opening during the festival. The theatre is especially for So-Riso and other Mamulengo groups. Performances, parties and dances are held in the tiered outdoor part, a most attractive and unusual venue. There is also Brazil's first puppet museum, with 1,400 figures, and archives available to researchers. We saw a fine display of many puppets and their booths. The aesthetic of the Mamulengo is colourful, instantly recognisable by the long, lugubrious visages and staring eyes of the puppets. Olinda is said to be its birthplace: more precisely its genesis was in an 18th-century local monastery where, in time-honoured fashion, the religious drama, staged with mechanical devices within the church, grew steadily more profane and was gradually moved out into the streets. The Puppet Centre now owns a Mamulengo character, made by one of the masters of the genre.

The Olinda Festival presented a number of Mamulengo shows, a great parade of giant figures, and several productions that tried to be more modern and "artistic," including one or two from Europe. Of those I saw the best in terms of artistry and professionalism was played by the A Caixa do Elefante (the Elephant Box), a group directed by its principal player, Mario de Ballenti. He is a glove-puppet performer of prodigious skills, whom I saw and praised in *Animations* the last time I was in Brazil. This time his show was a tender tribute to the incomparable poet and puppeteer Javier Villafañe, who died in 1996 and whose memory is revered throughout Brazil and beyond. Three of Villafañe's stories made up the show, which was attended by a large, mostly standing, audience of all ages in the market hall of Olinda. They were clearly having a wonderful time, and so indeed were the foreigners, even if we could not understand the words. Other companies included the extraordinary XPTO of S. Paulo who usually embody a Bauhaus style clothing the

performers in mathematical shapes and extravagant colours. This festival's offering was "Coquetel Clown," a piece of nonsense which the children enjoyed very much. A double bill of Beckett wordless pieces by the Sobrevento company was intense and ambitious but rather lacking in light, if not shade; and the same group's "Mozart Moments" was a pleasure to see again.

The work of the two committees, the Executive and the Encyclopedia, was really concentrated, with informative feedback from the several Commissions and some positive and heated deliberations. I merely sat in on some of the Exec's work, since I am a Councillor, not a member of that august body. The Committee was welcomed by Humberto Braga from the Brazilian Ministry of Culture, which had given support to the festival. He stated that puppetry in Brazil does not have its own budget, but that a national infrastructure for the art form was being built up and was currently in an important phase, with improving status and equality of opportunity for funding with the other performing arts, signalling real change. He was concerned that there was no consistent policy of support for popular puppetry, although its audiences were obviously important and abundant, and the artists were deserving of a better quality of life.

The question of training for puppeteers is a current priority, and the festival included a one-day conference on the subject at which I gave a paper alongside Margareta Niculescu, Mona Wiig of Norway, and Ana-Maria Amaral and Valmor Beltrame – the latter two being Brazilian. Another colloquium, on puppetry vis-à-vis the other arts, also had an interesting multicultural input, and both days were very well attended by Brazilian puppeteers. An interesting subject for discussion concerned the problem of preserving a folk tradition like the Mamulengo or the Maracatu – both full of obscenity and black humour – to make it acceptable in a theatre context without castrating the performance. Both the seminars were chaired by Ana-Maria Pessoa, a colleague of Sr Braga and an important part of the festival's success.

WEPA – the UNIMA Encyclopedia.

Henryk Jurkowski is gradually advancing his prodigious work on this project. He must by now be in possession of more knowledge on the world's puppetry than any man alive. He told us that some of the material he has received, in particular from Africa, is exciting and surprising. The enterprise is still suffering severely from the refusal of many UNIMA Centres to respond to the needs of the publication for their national contributions, for instance, Mexico, France, and Germany. Asia will need special attention, probably by personal visits to many countries by the Editor-in-Chief, Jurkowski. Where a UNIMA Centre has not replied, he is finding other expert advice and information, perforce bypassing the Centre. However a publisher has been identified, and enormous progress is being made. Pablo Medina of Argentina, author and archivist, was present and has taken responsibility for coordinating the information from the Central and South American subcontinents.

The AMATEUR Commission

Hubert Roman confessed that he was more or less alone in keeping this Commission alive, and hoped that the 2000 Congress would elect a more global and active group to run it. The RESEARCH Commission was reduced to three active members, led by Edi Majaron. He was concerned about the problem of documenting contemporary puppet theatre productions. (If I may include a brief plug for Jurkowski's "History of European Puppetry" Volume Two, it must be one of the best sources of descriptions of contemporary work available under one roof, as it were!)

The AFRICA Commission, chaired by Jacques Félix, was able to report rather more encouragingly on two new UNIMA Centres. In one of them, Senegal, UNIMA may even finance some activity with village children. In Tunisia, where the head of the national Centre, Moncef, died shockingly young,

there have been some positive signs of new life. One way or another, there are the beginnings of real communication and dialogue with this hitherto quiet continental giant. The sheer enormity of the Asian continent made the work of the ASIA Commission very difficult, and it is to be divided into regions. Perhaps the advent of video-conferencing will make the work of many of these commissions a little more manageable!

The most vital news came from Gerd Taube, the organizer of the Magdeburg Congress, UNIMA 2000, to be held from 24 June to 2 July. It promises very well, and seems not to be suffering too badly from financial shortage. The programme should be rich and varied: the official programme (about 45 groups) is currently being proposed, scouted, and chosen by a group of three people in the field plus Dr Taube. The "Off-programme" (about 25 groups) will be chosen only by Gerd Taube. No fees or travel costs are paid for these, but performance facilities, some publicity, and low-cost board and lodging will be. You can get contact names and addresses from me, Penny Francis, or Lorraine von Gehlen, the General Secretary of British UNIMA. Meanwhile the representative of the Organizational Committee is Dagmar Bremer, Jahnring 53, 39104 Magdeburg. Fax: 91 5 68 84 33.

Email: unima2000@hotmail.com

Olinda gave little evidence of the extremes of poverty and social deprivation evident in the big cities of Brazil. Clearly, the standard of life is very low for some people, but there was a climate of tolerance and peace, many smiling faces among the children in the streets, and some civic pride in Olinda's inheritance. We ate well in open-air buffet restaurants and only occasionally got a touch of Montezuma's revenge, which the local Caiparinha drink or coconut water soon assuaged. It was pleasant to be welcomed in such a very attractive and – for a European – exotic part of the world.

The PUBLICATIONS Commission in Croatia, August 1999

This Commission is perhaps the busiest at the moment, having produced the booklet/brochure "What is UNIMA?" in five languages (every member should ask for one from their Centre or representative, who can obtain it from Charleville on diskette) and now preparing the book on the "state of the art" of puppetry for Magdeburg next June. It is to be called "The Worldwide Art of Puppetry" and subtitled UNIMA 2000, and will contain articles and testimonies from a wide range of practitioners and writers. It will have directories of schools, periodicals, museums, centres, and so forth, which should be most useful.

You may imagine that the vast majority of the hours spent at the meetings in Zagreb, within the context of the PIF festival, directed by Livija Kroflin, was concerned with this project, which is advancing slowly but surely. (By the way, Britain was represented at this festival by Garlic Theatre, directed by Mark Pitman and Iklooshar Molara, who won a prize with their immensely entertaining and imaginative "St. George and the Dragon"). We, the Commission team, came away with a mountain of tasks to undertake but with a certain satisfaction in the efficacy of the meetings. There will be at least two more meetings of the book's compilers and editors before publication.

The Commission, most amiably chaired by Marek Waszkiel of Poland, received apologies from Gustav Gysin, who has been rather unwell and has for some time been undergoing tests and hospital visits, which restrict his normal activities. The Commission members present and indeed all who know him (Gusti is a frequent visitor to London) send their warmest wishes for the early recovery of his good health.

In the runup to the Millennium, UNIMA is in good health: the association has never been more energetic on behalf of the members. See you in Magdeburg!

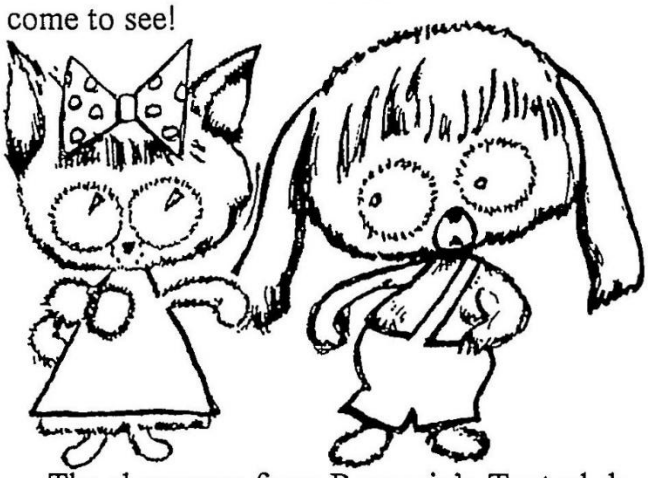
Praha-Ha!
One Man's View of the Prague International Festival of Marionette Art for Children, 1-7 June 1999

Peter Charlton

Anyone who has ever organized even the smallest puppet festival will know that the task is not an easy one. A week-long international one must obviously be that much harder. One set in Central Europe during a war seems almost unthinkable, but it happened – and it was fun too.

There are good culture shocks and bad ones. As May ended and June began, I swapped the damp of West Wales for the hot sunshine of Prague, swapped my way of life almost as severely after two puppet festivals in the UK (Blackpool and Kirkcudbright) as a performer, and gained my first experience of a foreign festival as a viewer. In our business we learn to adjust quickly: different food to feast on, no good English bitter to quench your thirst with, but plenty of cold Czech beer – just right for the climate – and a feast of puppetry – as varied as the diet.

The director of the festival, Todor Ristić, had originally lined up puppet companies from Hungary, Greece, Turkey, Slovakia, Yugoslavia, China and Macedonia, but the dangers emanating from the war in Kosova made the trip a mite too dangerous for many. Other companies, including the Norwich Puppet Theatre, dropped out because of the expense. This is one of those "expenses only" festivals. I suppose we were lucky that anyone turned up at all – but turn up they did. Work prevented me from getting to Prague for the opening shows, and I had to leave before the end, but during the three and a bit days I was there I saw some good (and some bad) stuff, met a lot of nice people, and enjoyed the wonderful city of Prague. It's always good to meet up with fellow-puppeteers, and, when you've struggled a bit having conversations in other languages, it's nice to meet a fellow Brit or two as well. I met up with George and Sheila Hinton, marionettists from Sutton, and David Wilde from York. But it was puppet shows we had come to see!



The show was from Romania's Teatrul de Papuşi. I'm not sure of the title of their show, as it was not the one listed in the programme (the programme turned out to be about as accurate as a Sunday newspaper report), and Romanian is one of the many languages in which I am illiterate. It seemed to be about pollination and the search for the meaning of life as seen through the eyes of a flower-child. Had I been able to follow the plot I'm sure I would have enjoyed it more; as it was, I found the puppets dull and unattractive, and the whole event somewhat uninspiring. Quite the reverse was the short performance given by Mikropodium from Budapest at the official opening ceremony. Tiny table-top puppets played accordion, danced, and spun plates. The art of puppetry at its most entrancing. The grace and agility of his ballerina was just superb. Next morning began with Puppet Theatre Rawlyk from the Ukraine with their story of "The Golden Cockerel." A delightfully simple umbrella arrangement provided a clever revolving set, and the actor/puppeteers were more than a little accomplished – especially the puppeteer working the wolf. An example of good puppetry defeating the language barrier.

The Austrians were next with Mobiles Theatre from Vienna performing "Die Kleine Seejungfrau," which turned out to be Hans Christian Andersen's epic "The Little Mermaid," which took me back to my days with Lilliput Marionette Theatre. Not that their version bore much resemblance to the

one we used to do. The sheer energy of the company kept me engaged in the first half, but awful things happen to puppet shows when they leave the puppets behind! The second half developed into a long yawn. Teatro di Carta, from Bologna, provided a jolly, traditional glove-puppet show, which would have benefited from a bit of frontal lighting. The puppeteer, Maurizio Mantani, only had a small light behind the proscenium, which resulted in most of the show being seen in silhouette. He explained that he usually performed on the beach and wasn't used to lights. I think the theatre lighting man could have helped him out! I wondered why all the Czech children roared with laughter when one of the characters said "cosí"? Does it mean something very rude in Czech? [It sounds like "kozy," a colloquial word meaning "tits," derived from "nanny goats" – editor.]

The evening show was billed as Studio Dell'arte from the Czech Republic with "Macbeth," and we had been promised masks, puppets, and special effects. Instead we had an interminable piece about Guinevère, Morgan, and Camelot with a lot of cooking, a bit of fighting, and not one single puppet. The only drama came from the audience's battle with sheer tedium; many left before the end – and some of them were Czechs, so it can't have been solely a language problem. I found it pretentious theatre at its most boring, but – more to the point – what on earth was it doing in a puppet festival?!

Thursday morning got off to a terrific start with the Staffan Björklunds Teater from Kävlioge, Sweden. An enchanting table-top presentation with simple, wooden puppets including an energetic woodpecker, horses, ducks, and a lovely clumsy foal. Puppeteer Erik Olsen, whose partner, Signe Birkboll, makes all the puppets, told me that everything he uses is grown on their land. Surely a good case for some green funding from the EU. It was next the turn of the Germans to do "The Little Mermaid," and Waidspeicher Theatre, from Erfurt, made a much better go of it than their Austrian neighbours. Ingeniously presented by two actors and a variety of puppets, including a finger-puppet "chorus," which was perhaps a shade on the small side for the large auditorium – but the action was always engaging. The sea witch, which appeared with a swift swish of the actress's hooped skirt, was one the best puppets of the festival.

The National Theatre of Cairo came next with a loud blast of Egyptian music (nobody sleeps when they're on!): the curtains opened to reveal a 20'-wide, brightly painted Egyptian street scene. Towering above the street were seven (yes, I said "seven"!) puppeteers. For 45 minutes marionettes whirled, danced, and cavorted up and down the street. Not great art by any means ,but I found it huge fun and a good demonstration of folk puppetry that got most feet tapping and hands clapping and brought a smile to almost every face. (One of the Germans I spoke to dismissed it haughtily as "Puppetry for old men!" Yes, perhaps – but why not?)

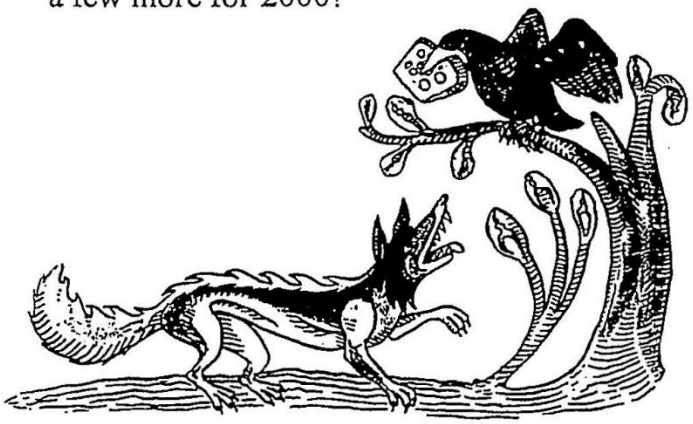
The late evening show should have been another Swedish company, but they had pulled out at the last minute, so a Japanese puppeteer, Na Hajku, now resident in Prague stepped in – and virtually stopped the festival. A combination of dance, physical theatre, mime, mask, and pure magical puppetry – here was the art at its highest level. Beautifully performed, very funny and breathtaking in turn – and sometimes all at once – he certainly earned the cheers and long applause that greeted the end of his show. I am told he has never appeared in the UK – just one man and a very small rig, surely one of our festivals can afford to bring him over?

Friday dawned, and we would have to leave just after lunch, so had time just to see two more shows. First off was Andrew Goodbolt, a tall, lanky puppeteer from Durban with a moralistic tale of poverty, hunger, drought, and greed in an African village, told with a mixture of hand puppets and marionettes. The story certainly had

charm and, when he has worked it a little longer, will be a strong piece. He seemed somewhat cramped on the tiny stage, had problems with his sound track as well as a few broken strings, and the overpacked theatre masked some of the action for me. But there is a good show in there, and Andrew has the talent and personality to make it work. Personally, I'd get rid of all the "fades to black." The young Czech audience, not being able to follow the dialogue, kept thinking it had finished and burst into applause!

The last was – for me – the best. Los Titiriteros de Binéfar from Spain with "The Fable of the Fox." A countryside set with a real running water waterfall! A bold move with an audience of children; it is much to their credit that there was virtually no rushing off to the loo during this show. It was simply beautiful. Scarcely any words were used, just puppets and scenic effects in this story of a farmer and his friendship with a fox. By the end there wasn't a dry eye in the house and most of us were on our feet cheering.

The director has promised us a bigger and better festival next year. There were only five Brits there this year – how about having a few more for 2000?



Stringed Actors
Some Puppets of Rajasthan in the 1990s

Janet Macallister

Once they were part of the everyday life of the nomadic desert gypsies of Rajasthan. These days it is not so easy to find a traditional puppet troupe. The desert courts, for which they performed, have vanished, and with them their patrons. There was a time when the puppeteers were so honoured that they were known as Raj-Mats, or royal artists.

Heroes and their brave deeds formed much of the culture of these warrior people and inspired the tribal puppeteers. They performed popular plays based on events in the life of the hero Amar Singh Rathore, a Rajput warrior from the 17th century under the Mughal emperor, Shah Jahan. Today there are still a few of these tellers of tales, travelling from village to village across the vast Thar desert with their small troupe of puppets and musical instruments. They can be found at fairs and festivals: shadows of their former importance, but still there are glimpses of the role they once played in the lives of these people. I was fortunate to find a few.

In Rajasthan the Kathputli puppets (*katha* meaning story and *putli* puppet) traditionally consist of head, torso, and arms, and they are usually strung with three to six strings, which are tied to the fingers of the puppeteers. Most are created without legs: dressed in costumes based on mediaeval Rajasthani dress, the long skirts of both male and female characters hide this, and, when cleverly manipulated, this fact goes unnoticed. The manipulator – there is usually only one – works from above, over a bar, on to a small stage.

When puppet theatre was at its most popular, it was set up in the villages by the itinerant entertainers. Usually a couple, often husband and wife, or part of a family unit. The manipulator was also responsible for the distinctive whistle sound, which can be heard

throughout the performance. The *boli*, as it is called, is used for a major part of the puppet dialogue. It consists of a thin rubber strap stretched between two thin bamboo strips tied firmly at both ends. When held between the teeth and lips, the runner tape acts as a reed and provides a shrill note.

When it is produced through the *boli*, speech acquires a very different sound. It is also used to produce effective atmosphere throughout the performance. The more daring the act, the shriller the whistle becomes. This, in conjunction with gesture and movement, is the main method of communication. Over hundreds of years a puppet vocabulary based on a code of gestures has developed, and the correct use of these also helps make a good puppeteer. Dialogue has never been an important part of this type of puppetry.

The music in the puppet show is usually based on the folk airs and songs of the area. It is provided by a squeeze-box, played by the only other member of the troupe, who is seated in front and to the side of the stage.

In today's puppet performances at festivals and fairs the heroic deeds and historical events – which used to be the main part of the performance and which could last anything up to an hour – have diminished. The major part now consists largely of "trick" and humorous acts: heads coming off, changes of identity and sex, and other comedy and magic turns, which used to be merely the comic-relief acts for the entertainment of the emperor and his court.

Many of the animal puppets are still popular. I saw a delighted audience of adults and children at a performance in Ahmedabad shrieking with horror and amazement as the *naga* (mythical snake) puppet dipped and swayed on and off the edge of the stage at the children sitting on the dust in the front row.

It was there, too, that I saw a collection of puppet characters which, when not in use, were hung in groups from the puppeteer's tent, ready, in correct order, for when they would be required. This is the traditional method of storing the cast, but one does not see it like that very often today.

While in Ahmedabad I also met a professional puppeteer, Kavi Pal. He is known throughout India for his special puppet skills, both in making and performance. He and his wife, Leela, work very much on the social issues of the day. With a large and ever-growing collection of modern glove- and hand-puppets, they perform children's shows at kindergartens, for school parties, and so forth.

He also has a beautiful collection of leather shadow puppets. The ones I saw were 1-2' high, depending on the importance of the character, and are used to perform "Krishnaleela," which is based on the story of Krishna.

Another shadow show Kavi Pal performs is based on the stories of the Ramayana. This is a smaller group of stories, which he tells in English together with songs that describe each event in Sanskrit verse. This is a touring company, which, when at full strength, consists of seven members, all of whom work as manipulators, puppet makers, singers, dancers, and teachers. I did not see a performance, but I did see the puppets, many of which are, I understand, made with the assistance of visiting puppeteers, who come from many parts of India and from overseas to study Indian puppetry.

There were more puppets to be found in

Rajasthani marionettes from *Let's Look at Puppets* by A R Philpott, 1966 – redrawn

Rajasthan. An overnight bus took me from Ahmedabab to Udaipur. Some say that "you haven't seen India if you haven't visited Udaipur." I can well believe it. This lovely city, a contrast to the dusty streets of Ahmedabad, is a green oasis in the desert area which surrounds it. The city is dominated by the fairy-tale Lake Palace, a white marble extravaganza on Lake Pichola, in the centre of the old city.

At the Bharatiya Lok Kala Museum I saw some beautifully crafted puppets, presented in a short, daily programme which came close to the traditional Kathputli style. This museum is dedicated to preserving and encouraging the performing arts of the area. The small puppet theatre is an ideal venue, and the daily performances are given by students from the college of puppetry housed within the building.

I met a number of the crafts people who make the puppets: a wood carver, seamstresses, and set designers – all under the supervision of IP Bhati, a dedicated artist and puppeteer. He described to me how he supervised the students in the construction, painting, and dressing of the puppets as well as acting as stage manager. In these performances three to four manipulators usually work five to eight puppets. Music is provided on tapes; I saw no evidence of live musicians.

Another interesting performance I saw while in Udaipur was at the Rajasthan Folk Festival, which opened the day I arrived. Unfortunately, I could not get any written information about it in English, apart from a poster. From that I know that it is an annual event and is held in the same venue every year. Although mainly consisting of craft exhibitions, it is also a type of trade show, with dance performances and puppet shows as part of the entertainment.

The park-like area where the festival took place was broken up into small, intimate entertainment spaces, with a large open-air dance area at one end. The puppet performances I saw were in ideal, small open tents, the back walls and roofs lined with textiles, and the floors covered with locally-made rugs. Here, as tradition dictates, all the puppet characters appeared on the stage together: the king, queen, and the royal personages in the centre; with the less important and, therefore, smaller puppets to the sides. Although I did not see an evening performance, where the lighting would have added to the atmosphere, the ones I did catch, open to the warm winter desert sun, and witnessed by a happy, volatile, and very knowledgeable audience, captured, I should like to think, something of the atmosphere of the old Kathputlis.

During other visits to India I have been privileged to see some modern puppet theatre, performed in both Delhi and Calcutta. When one realizes that there is such a rich store of puppet tradition, it is easy to see why it is still incorporated in the performing arts of modern India. There are those who say that as a result of this puppetry is losing something of its "truth." For some traditionalists, animation, technology, and modern styles detract from the truth and as a result the simple, uncomplicated messages are being lost. Others disagree, arguing that if they "do not move with the times" puppetry will lose out altogether and that by incorporating modern methods into some of the old ways they are helping to keep them alive and relevant. It is a vexed question which only time will judge.

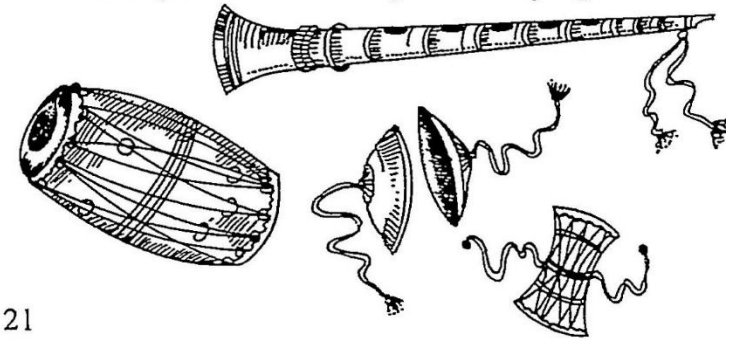


Illustration from *Living Dolls, Story of Indian Puppets* by J Pani, 1986

A History of European Puppetry Volume Two: The Twentieth Century

by Henryk Jurkowski

John McCormick

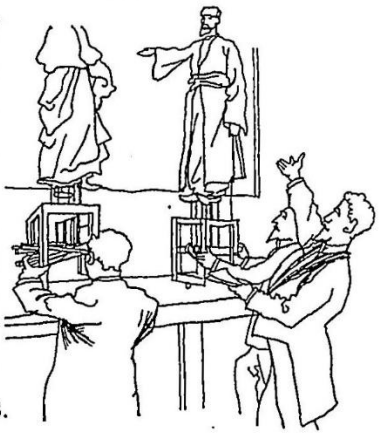
The only person with the breadth of knowledge to have written this valuable reference work is probably Henryk Jurkowski. The second volume of his two-volume history, it covers the 20th century.

An underlying assumption about most 19th-century marionette theatre was that it was a miniature version of actors' theatre. Companies which described themselves as "artistic" were simply pointing to their skills as "artistes." In contrast, 20th-century puppet theatre is more often perceived as an art form. It has distanced itself from imitation of "live theatre" and has placed itself in the domain of the visual arts and other performance forms such as mime and dance.

Jurkowski's volume is arranged in chronological order, with a loose attempt at thematic organisation. His first chapter, "Modernist Initiatives", covers virtually everything from the Chat Noir cabaret to the Bauhaus. The Chat Noir cabaret is allocated several interesting pages, based on Jules Lemaître's account of it, and several other significant artistic cabarets are passed in a rapid review. Jurkowski suggests that "The use of the medium, in some of these artistic cabarets, showed the potential of the puppet as actor, and influenced the attitudes of theatre practitioners."

In sections entitled "an alliance with poets" and "puppets in the dramatic theatre," Jurkowski reminds us of the close parallel between puppet theatre and experimental theatre at that period. I am less convinced than Jurkowski that Maeterlinck, when he described his plays of the 1890s as being for "puppets," was really writing puppet plays. Like Gordon Craig and others, he was expressing dissatisfaction with the theatre actors of the period, desiring an ideal actor

to interpret a theatre concerned with movements of the soul rather than external life. Craig himself is allocated a 20-page slot. No one will deny his vast influence on puppet theatre. However, this is a history more than a theoretical work, and the Craig interlude interrupts the historical flow.



In the context of symbolist theatre, the performances of Henri Signoret's Petit Théâtre (1888-1894), with its rod puppets operated by keys, sound remarkably like those of Paul Fort's symbolist Théâtre d'Art of 1891, which also brought together painters and poets.

Pre-1917 Russia was alive with artistic experiment, and some of the ideas of Vladimir Sokolov presaged a nonanthropomorphic idea of the marionette, and a performance of a purely abstract nature. There is an interesting link between these ideas and the Italian Futurist experiments of Marinetti, Depero, Balla and others.

The idea of mechanization was important to many of the avant-gardists – one manifestation of it was the machine dances of Foregger in Russia, and the Bauhaus experiments are very relevant here also. Often the gap between the human performer and the puppet was minimized. In the puppet world the famous Swiss production of *King Stag* (puppets by Sophie Taeuber)

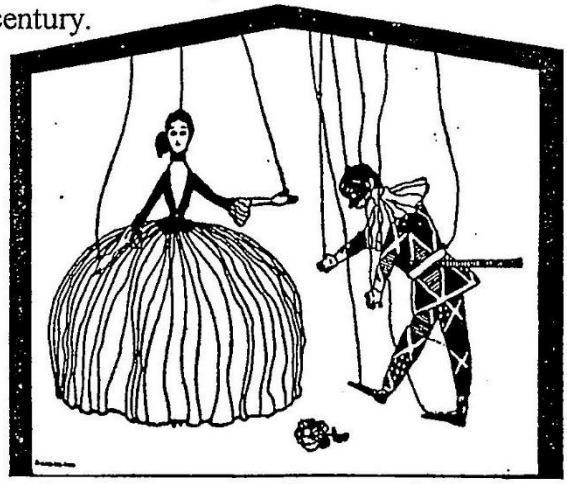
Scenery for the motion *Romeo and Juliet* drawn by E G Craig, ca 1916

"Pedal" puppets of Henri Signoret from *Puppets and Puppetry* by C Beaumont, 1958

22

showed the way in which the design of puppet theatre was moving towards an aesthetic which acknowledged the material nature of the puppet. Taeuber's figures were "pure" puppets; they evoked human beings, but did not make a serious attempt to resemble them.

The second chapter deals more directly with mainstream puppet theatre from Paul Brann and the Munich Artists' Theatre to the 1930s. Jurkowski notes a new and conscious emphasis on the theatricality of the marionette and a strong move away from relics of naturalist illusion. He passes from Richard Teschner's beautiful scenes and figures inspired by the Indonesian *wayang*, to Josef Skupa's famous characters Spejbl and Hurvínek in the 1920s. Podrecca's Piccoli theatre is fitted into this chapter, though much of his work was no more than a continuation of the work of the great Italian marionette companies of the late 19th century.



There is an excellent section on the Efimovs, with their development of the rod-puppet, and Obraztsov's solo performances with schematic hand puppets. The Hungarian, Géza Blattner, who worked in Paris from 1925, is also shown as a significant and seminal figure. Jurkowski slips in a theoretical section on the Prague School in this chapter. This sudden injection of quite complex theory is either too much or too little, and probably a bit bewildering to the uninitiated (one might refer the reader to *Aspects of the Puppet Theatre*, Jurkowski's own book, or to a special number of *Semiotica* (No. 47, 1983).

Chapter III, "Support and Oppression," examines the relationship between the state and puppetry, mostly in Russia, Eastern Europe, and the Fascist countries. The link between puppetry and education is a key element here and was one of the factors that led to the building of the Říše Loutek (Puppet Empire) theatre in Prague in 1928. Such developments belonged to a new notion of professional puppetry as distinct from "folk" puppetry.

In Eastern Europe modern puppetry really began in the 1920s, with Klemenčić, in Ljubljana; the first Romanian artistic theatre in 1928; Béla Büky in Hungary; and various Polish companies, notably Baj of Warsaw, which set out, initially as an amateur group, closely associated with education and drew much of its inspiration from the szopka (crèche). In France, Marcel Temporal and Robert Desarthis are seen as amongst the significant figures in this movement (Jacques Chesnais is curiously absent). Desarthis's lavish stagings of such pieces as "Michel Strogoff" are commented upon, though in practice the Pitou company of travelling marionettes before 1913 had certainly been putting on productions at least as spectacular and lavish as anything Desarthis could offer.

The relation of puppetry and ideology, especially in the Soviet Union, allows Jurkowski to examine the adaptation of Petrushka and the creation of the company Sanitary Petrushka (for an analysis of this phenomenon, the reader should look at Catriona Kelly's valuable book on Petrushka). This chapter does present a great deal of generally unfindable or unfamiliar material on the early development of the Demmeni company of Leningrad and contextualizes the creation of the Moscow Central State Puppet Theatre, under the direction of Sergei Obraztsov. I cannot entirely go along with Jurkowski's fondness for superlatives and absolutes, such as the grand statement that Obraztsov "laid down the ground rules for the profession and can therefore be said to have founded the profession of puppeteering."

Illustration from front cover of Podrecca programme

The impact of fascism is explored in the context of Italy, Germany and Spain. The German section, with some important pages on the "Strength through Joy movement," shows how a few groups became overtly Nazi propagandists and how others, including Max Jacob's Hohnsteiner company, failed to put up any resistance. Nazi control during the war years meant that in the occupied territories the activities of puppeteers were constantly checked and restricted. In Czechoslovakia, Skupa's resistance, until his eventual arrest by the Gestapo, shows how a puppeteer could take a strong political stand. For Italy there are some rather vague references to critics and censors finding some shows objectionable, whilst in Spain the main issue seems to be the death of Lorca, some of whose puppet plays were staged by La Tía Norica of Cádiz. Of greater interest is the Catalan puppeteer, Ezequiel Vigués (known as Didó), who did not always see eye to eye with the Fascist régime. I should have liked some information about Franquist attempts to create a "national" puppet figure (Juanin).

Jurkowski also produces some very interesting examples of wartime puppets in the Polish armies in the Soviet Union and those in the prisoner-of-war and concentration camps.

Chapter IV covers the post-war period, and is an opportunity for taking stock of both new and traditional work. Jurkowski is misleading when he suggests that in France the touring marionette theatres performing melodramas continued after the Second World War. His example, the Pajot-Waltons, had their fit-up destroyed by a storm in 1905 and thereafter turned their attention to music-hall turns and became famous for these – only very occasionally did they try, for old times' sake, to give a performance of one of their melodramas.

Hohensteiner Kasper made by T Eggink, 1937, from *Front Puppen Theater* edited by D Kolland

There are some useful pages on the theatres of Brussels, Liège and Antwerp, but also an assumption that only one theatre was called the Poesjenellenkelder, whereas, in fact this was a generic term for a puppet theatre (Pulcinella cellar).

With Chapter V ("New Languages") Jurkowski gets into his stride because of his own firsthand familiarity with so much of the work he is discussing. His feeling for the aesthetics of the puppet theatre now takes over and his real delight in his subject begins to appear. We pass from Yves Joly and the postwar cabaret to Fred Schneckenburger and the use of plastics and other new materials, through to the work of Albrecht Roser. Jurkowski places all this in the theatrical context of the "new" drama of the 1950s. For the West European reader, the account of the massive development of puppetry throughout Eastern Europe is valuable. Jurkowski also shows how the pressures of Social Realism made Obraztsov's work move away from modernist aesthetics and back to the idea of the puppet as imitation of the human.

In the satellite republics ways of escaping the stranglehold of social realism were appearing. In Czechoslovakia "black theatre" revolutionized notions of stage space, allowing the action to fill the whole stage. In some states folklore was used as a way of re-establishing a sense of national identity (eg, the Polish reinterpretation of the szopka or nativity play). Teatr Groteska of Krakow mixed puppets with actors and masks, and puppet theatre became a way of

An Antwerp cellar theatre from *Poesje in Antwerpen* by P Schepens and G van de Casteele

giving life to poetic images. Eventually such changes began to emerge even in Russia.

Between pages 291 and 292 there is a solid block of 177 illustrations. These form a valuable visual chapter in themselves, which is worth returning to when one has completed the reading of the whole book. My only quibble is with the quality of reproduction of which Mellen seems capable.

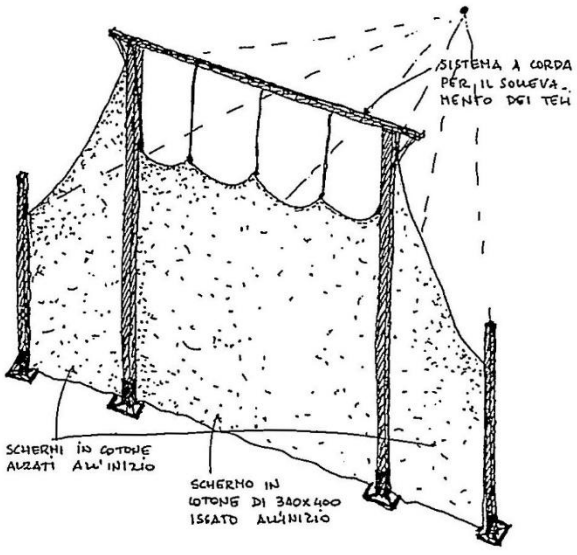
Chapter VI, "Catching up with Modern Art," shows the closing of the gap between puppetry and other types of performance, the employment of Brechtian and cinematic techniques and the move towards a theatre of objects. In the sixties and seventies Poland seems to have led the way in such new approaches, with strong echoes in Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary. Czechoslovakia had to await the development of Drak before it could really break with the "Social-Realist disease." Joseph Krofta led Drak towards the "atomisation" of the dramatic action, and the demand for the spectator to reconstruct it. He also blurred the distinction between puppet theatre and actors' theatre still further.

In France "the break with classicism" provides an opportunity to look at Alain Recoing and André Tahon (who seems to be credited with unnecessary originality for his use of the "marotte"). Dominique Houdart and Hubert Japelle illustrate the significant rôle of literature in French puppet theatre.

In Italy Maria Signorelli and Otello Sarzi are mentioned, but the general suggestion is that not much happened before the 1970s. In Switzerland both Therese Keller and Michel Poletti receive a special eulogy, as does Michael Meschke for his work for the Stockholm Marionetteatern. In England Jurkowski selects for mention The Little Angel, John Blundall, Barry Smith and Christopher Leith. The final section, "fine artists enter the arena," looks, all too briefly, at the Barcelona group La Claca and their production of *Mori el Merma*, created in collaboration with Joan Miró, and at the sculptor-puppeteers Björn Fühler and Henk Boerwinkel. For Jurkowski the sixties and seventies were a landmark with the "victory of the visible animator" and the use of "multi-media theatre both in eastern and Western Europe."

Chapter VII looks at the eighties, the "Europeanisation" of puppetry with the disappearance of the East-West political divide. The development of Divadlo Minor in Prague out of the former Central State Puppet theatre is in fact typical of the changes in most of the former Eastern Europe. The emergence of new groups in Russia exploring multimedia and catching up with trends in Western art is also mentioned and a survey of reunited Germany shows just how much German puppetry has developed in a strongly topical and contemporary direction. Austria, Holland, Slovenia and Scandinavia receive a quick glance, and the most important conclusion is that the last of these, once a little behind, has now "caught up." Jean-Pierre Lescot, François Lazaro, and Massimo Schuster represent new tendencies in France; whilst in Spain, Jurkowski focuses on La Tartana (founded 1977), new groups evolving out of the Barcelona school; La Fanfarra's attempts to create a new comic character, Malic; Bambalina Titelles of Valencia; and Jordi Bertrán. By the end of the chapter we are aware that "'Europeanisation" also means pluralism.

The final chapter looks at the diversity of modern puppetry, in particular the presence of actors on the stage (Neville Tranter, Drak), and the increased use of the fine arts as a point of reference (Taptoe's Magritte-inspired piece "Heaven"). Faulty Optic's work with "objets trouvés" is also chosen as representing a particular trend. The revival and development of shadow theatre rightly has a place here, with a look at Jean-Pierre Lescot and Amoros and Augustin and a fuller examination of Teatro Gioco Vita, including their technical innovations such as the break with the fixed screen.



The post-cabaret Philippe Genty with his quasi-dance pieces "replacing the figurative puppet with objects or unfashioned cloth materials" is then looked at (Genty is given credit for originating something that Feike Boschma started doing quite a number of years ago).

By 1980 "object theatre" was a buzz phrase. As the actor appeared increasingly on the puppet stage, the status of the puppet changed. As early as 1978 Drak's "Circus Unikum" (1978) used a single puppet figure surrounded by live actors. The puppet subtly became an object to be handled by actors. With a new focus on the material nature of the puppet as distinct from its interpretive quality, any object could become a puppet (and no longer required the addition of human features, such as eyes or mouth). In France the Théâtre de Cuisine used kitchen implements as puppets and the Théâtre Manarf developed a sort of expressionist theatre with added value given to props. The material nature of the human body has meant that even parts of the performers' bodies have become puppets (Hugo and Inès and the Polish Teatr 3/4).

The coverage of this book is wide, but a bit idiosyncratic. The field covered is vast, and Jurkowski is faced with the problem of the differing chronological rates of development in various countries. This sometimes leads to an uncomfortable spreading of a particular puppeteer or company across several chapters. However, a useful index goes some way towards alleviating the problem.

Broadly speaking, Jurkowski gives a sense of overall shape and development, but the need to mention everything does lead to the constant interruption of a thematic discussion with a clatter of bits of information, much of which is there only because it cannot be left out, but is so reduced that at best it can act only as an aide-mémoire.

The greatest strength of the book is its coverage of Polish and Czech puppet theatre, and this is particularly valuable to many West Europeans not versed in the Slav languages.

Jurkowski knows a vast amount about his subject but does tend to deliver most of what he has to say as incontrovertible fact. As in any book of this scope there are mistakes and misinterpretations. We note for example that Erwin Piscator in his production of "The Good Soldier Švejk" had Max Pallenberg as Švejk and *all* the other parts played by puppets. In fact there were a number of live actors involved in the production, though one of the features was the large cartoon-like figures created by Georg Grosz. The Italian puppet Sandrone is referred to as Sandrino, and Jurkowski confuses his celebrated 20th-century exponent, Francisco Campogalliani, with Luigi Campogalliani, who is thought to have created the character in the 18th century.

One final personal note: Gaston Baty seems to pop up again and again. Interesting as Baty is (I devoted five years of my life to writing a PhD thesis on him), I cannot really understand the disproportionate importance allowed to him in this book.

Henryk Jurkowski, *A History of European Puppetry Volume Two: The Twentieth Century*, The Edwin Mellen Press, Lampeter, 1998. 527 pages, 178 illustrations – available from Ray DaSilva.

Illustration from *Un mondo di figura d'ombra* by Teatro Gioco Vita

Cartoon by H van Elteren from *Feike Boschma: Een Leven Aan Draadjes* by H Alkema, 1992

Eduard Bersudsky and Sharmanka

John M Blundall

Many UNIMA members have had opportunities to see the work of the remarkable Russian kinetic sculptor Eduard Bersudsky. During his life in Russia a general shortage of suitable material to construct major pieces seriously restricted his output of new work. Since his move to Scotland the proliferation of material has resulted in the development of a vast range of large-scale new work expressing his unique view of life.

In recent years a considerable number of the kinetic sculptures have been seen in several countries, including the USA, Denmark, and, currently, Switzerland. He has also undertaken a number of prestigious commissions.

It has always been a great joy to me to be able to spend time with Eduard and witness the development of his complex sculptures and their later combination with atmospheric music and lighting – the work of Tatyana Jakovskaya. The result is an exceptional experience for the observer.

Eduard has always been fascinated by puppets, particularly the marionette; and last year, after watching a street busker in Denmark, he became determined to create one himself. So, for several weeks, he spent time with me to create a figure – the result being a large figure, unclothed, except for a bow tie, and given the name "Archibald."

For many hours Eduard improvized with this figure, to music by The Tiger Lilies – the extraordinary group that created the music for "Shockheaded Peter" – with whom he struck up a great friendship. The figure has remarkable expressive qualities and frequently emerges at social occasions with friends in the Sharmanka Gallery – much to the amusement of everyone.

Fascinated by mechanisms and moving figures, Eduard is now developing a major work – the Millennium Clock. It will stand some ten meters high, and will also involve a number of collaborators: Tim Stead, the outstanding furniture maker and sculptor; Jürgen Tübbecke, clock maker; Annica Sandström, glass maker; and myself.

The Millennium Clocktower will stand in The National Museum of Scotland for the year 2000, and then in other Scottish cities. There will also be an exhibition of other kinetic sculptures in the Museum during the New Year.

Sharmanka Kinetic Theatre can be seen at 14 Kings Street, Glasgow. Tel 0141 552 7080.

["Sharmanka" is Russian for "barrel-organ"]

Wayang

The Seventh Indonesian Wayang Festival was held in Jakarta 7-14 August. A report on it by member Sarah Bilby, who gave a *wayang kancil* performance there, will appear in the next issue. In the meantime readers may like to know that a report by Nancy Staub (member of UNIMA-USA, UNIMA Councillor at Large, and UNIMA Member of Honour) will be appearing in *The Puppetry Journal* (The Puppeteers of America), Winter Issue 1999; a more detailed report has been written by Karen Smith <kasmith@dnet.id>

But to give a little foretaste, drawing – with their kind permission – on Staub and Smith, the festival presented 50 *wayang* performances by Indonesian and foreign

dalangs of a wide array of forms, from ancient ones like *wayang beber* (in which the story is painted on scrolls and unrolled in the course of narration to musical accompaniment), performed by Ki Sumardi of Pacitan; to more experimental shows like that by Ki Sukasman of Yogyakarta which included dancers performing in front of and behind the screen; to a form like *wayang ukur*, of which I have never heard. The performances attracted crowds of up to 2,000. Of Ki Asep Sunandar Sunarya's *wayang golek* performance Karen Smith writes: "Here is a puppet master of the first order. Since 1975 he has been performing approximately 120 times a year. He has performed and taught abroad, receiving many awards both locally as well as internationally. His comic genius, both of the slapstick and more subtle forms, is legendary. His puppets breathe! And you know exactly what they are thinking and feeling! He truly takes an inanimate object and injects it with life. Indeed his puppets have more life and guts than most humans!" This dalang, of whom Anna Ingleby has written enthusiastically, should be appearing at Charleville next year and, possibly, in this country too.

Books on Wayang

Nancy Straub recommends a lavishly illustrated publication she discovered in Jakarta: *Leather Gods & Wooden Heroes: Java's Classical Wayang* by David I Irvine, Times Editions, Singapore, 1996. A boxed set of five new books of English translations of *wayang* performances, published by the Lontar Foundation, a nonprofit-making organization concerned with spreading knowledge of the Indonesian arts, is very soon to be available. John McGlynn, whom I contacted <lontar@ibm.net>, did not, unfortunately, pass on the price(s), but other details are below. The Lontar distributor is, The American Gamelan Institute, Box 1050, Lebanon NH 03766; t/fx 603 448 8837; http://www.gamelan.org/AGI/acc.html/

1. *Released from Kala's Grip: A Wayang Exorcism Performance from East Java* (Original title: *Ruwat Murwakala*; performed by Ki Sarib Purwacarita, translated and with an introduction by Victoria M Clara van Groenendael. XX + 82 pages.

2. *The Traitor Jobin: A Wayang Golek Performance from West Java* (Original title: *Jobin Balik*); performed by Ki Sindu Jotaryono, translated by Daniel McGuire and Lukman Aris, with an introduction by Robert Petersen. XIV + 234 pages.

3. *Gatotkaca on Trial: A New Creation in the Shadow Theater of Central Java* (Original title: *Gatotkaca Dakwa*); performed by Ki Gaib Widapandaya, translated by Gloria Soepomo Poedjosoedarmo, with an introduction by Roger Long. XXII + 232 pages.

4. *Demon Abduction: A Wayang Ritual Drama from West Java* (Original title: *Barikan*); performed by Basari; translated and with an introduction by Mathew Cohen. XX + 248 pages.

5. *The Birth of Gatotkaca: A Sundanese Wayang Golek Performance from West Java* (Original title: *Jabang Tutuka*); performed by Asep Sunandar Sunarya; translated by Andrew N. Weintraub.. XVIII + 284 pages.

The series editor is Joan Suyenaga; the indigenous-language script is also presented; all books measure 23 x 16.5 cm.

Detailed descriptions of the contents of all the pieces are available. To give a flavour: "*Released from Kala's Grip*, presented here in both English and Javanese, is an exorcism shadow-play performed by the puppeteer Ki Sarib Purwacarita in an East Javanese village in 1983. The performance was executed for the purification of a young bride who, as an only child, had to be exorcised before she could safely enter married life. During the performance the puppeteer played upon the belief that human fortune, at least in part, depends on good relations with the powers of the past, in particular one's ancestors. As is customary in *wayang*, he also commented on such topical issues as child care and education, even while entertaining the audience with jokes on local issues."

"*The Birth of Gatotkaca*, presented here in both English and Sundanese, was performed by Asep Sunandar Sunarya in 1994. In the story, three-and-a-half-year-old Jabang Tutuka is killed by a demon king. The gods bring the child back to life by boiling his body in a hot cauldron with a variety of metals. Jabang Tutuka is reborn as Gatotkaca, regarded as a mythical nationalist hero since the birth of the Indonesian nation. More important perhaps than the individual plot-line, are the ways in which the puppeteer reflects on the social, economic, and political conditions that preoccupy the Sundanese on an everyday basis. Through performance, *wayang* plays a pivotal role at the centre of struggles over the meaning of nationality, community, language, and identity."

Much closer to home, in the window of Henry Pordes Books Ltd, 58-60 Charing Cross Road, London, to be precise, I spied a fine-looking book on *wayang* called *Shadow Theatre in Java: The Puppets, Performance and Repertoire* by Alit Djajasoebrata. The illustrations, which include performance photographs from the thirties, are wonderful. Having bought it literally four days ago, I have had no time even to dip into the text, but the Foreword by Hein Reedijk, director of the Museum of Ethnology, Rotterdam, augurs well enough: "This publication is the climax of a period of almost forty years of systematic and devoted collecting.

"The ideas behind the book took shape in 1966, when the exhibition *Wayang purwa: shadow theatre and world view* was shown at the Rotterdam Museum of Ethnology." Reedijk concludes by saying the book aims to make the many aspects of *wayang* theatre available to "a wider audience around the world." This no doubt means a good deal will be familiar territory, but it should be sound, and is certainly, I would suggest, worth checking out. The large-format hardback, published by The Pepin Press this year, costs £14.95; Pordes had 10 copies in stock.

Drama Review

The Fall issue of *The Drama Review* is devoted to "Puppets, Masks, and Performing Objects." It is nicely intellectual with a good range: articles are by John Bell (several), Stephen Kaplin, Richard Schechner, Peter Schumann, Mark Sussman, Pyotr Bogatyrev, Edward Portnoy, Theodora Skipitares, Salil Singh, and Steve Tillis; also contains an interview with Julie Taymor. A good read at $10. ISSN 1054-2043.

The issue is guest-edited by John Bell, who led, I am informed, an excellent symposium on "Puppetry – the Global Experience" at World Puppets Portland, 1-3 October 1999.

Media Watch

A puppet theatre partly funded by the British Council is waging war on corruption in Kenya. "Puppets Against Corruption" has been drawing large crowds in Nairobi's Uhuru park. The name of the company, which has previously tackled AIDS, female genital mutilation, and drug abuse, is, unfortunately, not given in an otherwise informative piece filed from Nairobi by David Gough (*The Guardian*, 8 10 99).

The Daily Telegraph (*Connected* supplement, 7 10 99) carries a report (plus photograph) on how "A 250-year-old puppet-making technique and virtual reality have helped engineers in Japan to create a horse-riding therapy for the disabled." "To have the robotics achieve a faithful reproduction of horse motion, the researchers turned to the 18th-century art of making traditional *karakuri* puppets, whose intricate mechanisms enable highly natural, human-like movements." Look on the Internet for more on these Edo-era figures.

Animals

"The Lion King" did not have to cross the Atlantic for news of it to travel, but its opening at the Lyceum 19 October has obviously generated quite a lot of publicity in the media here (see, for example, the profile of Josette Bushell-Mingo, who plays Rafiki, the baboon who is also a shaman, in *The*

Independent on Sunday, 10 10 99). The masks and puppets are said to be as influenced by Eastern theatre (director Julie Taymor spent four years in Indonesia) as Hollywood. In fact, the stage play is a good distance from the film of the same name.

Enjoyed one of the highlights of series two of the Asian comedy programme "Goodness Gracious Me" (BBC 2, 13 8 99) which might have been called "Sooty and Suttee."

Flat Eric's "obituary" occupied the front page of *The Independent*'s *Friday Review* (1 10 99), though the smart money is on the Levi's-clad ad star rising vampirically from the grave in pursuit of even greater earnings.

That same newspaper (16 10 99) reported a "shaggy-bird story" about how dozens of families with excited children queued outside the Harlequin Theater in Redhill, Surrey, attracted by posters promoting "An Audience with David Elliott and the New EMU." But those present soon smelt a rat: "Uneasy murmurs from the audience turned first to bewildered protests and then angry heckling with things being thrown at the stage. Scuffling broke out, children began to cry...." Instead of the large irascible bird which used to perch on the late Rod Hull's arm, the entertainment proved to be "a lecture on the intricacies of the Elevator Music Updater, or EMU, a device intended to let people choose their own sounds in lifts – the brainchild of David Elliott." Don't ask.

Don't know whether it is because Noddy is one of our country's most successful entertainment exports to the United States, where burning rubber is de rigueur in any self-respecting action film, but the bell-hatted inhabitant of Toytown is to take part in his first car chase – in tyre-screeching pursuit of joy-riding goblins. Could be they are merely taking home-grown speed-freak Mr Toad as a role model, of course.

Anima

Radio 3's *Sunday Feature* (10 10 99) was devoted to the Brazilian artist Ana Maria Pacheco, who for the last two years has been preparing for an exhibition to mark the end of her period in residence at the National Gallery. The documentary made me want to see her work, particularly her tableau entitled "The Dark Night of the Soul," featuring a St Sebastian-like figure. She is more a sculptor than a painter. Her 20 large carved wood polychrome figures are on show at London's National Gallery until 9 January and then travel to Wolverhampton, Swansea, Manchester, Sheffield, and Brighton. Effigies, waxworks, and mannequins seem to be ubiquitous in galleries nowadays, having become virtually a cliché (Ron Mueck, the Chapmans....), but do not let that put you off seeing Pacheco's powerful imagery.

Party for Mr Squiggle

Ray DaSilva

I was surprised to receive a letter from Australia with a 45¢ stamp bearing a picture of Mr Squiggle (unfortunately, it is technically impossible to reproduce it here). A few days later, *Australian Puppeteer*, Winter 1999, arrived with a picture of Norman and Margaret Hetherington (Mr Squiggle's creators) on the front. "Mr Squiggle and Friends," the ABC television programme, has been appearing continuously since 1 July 1959 (maybe St Simeon was smiling). Mr Squiggle (who lives with his friends on the moon) has a pencil for a nose, and children are invited to send in their random squiggles, which he transforms into pictures. ABC claims that this is the world's longest-running children's TV show and decided to hold a party, while the Australian post decided to issue a commemorative stamp. Well done, Norman and Margaret.

Films

The London Film Festival, 3-18 11 99, is showing *Being John Malkovich*, in which John Cusack plays an "unemployed puppet master and perennial loser." Described as a "madcap, hilarious farce with great comic turns for all the cast."

Love in the Mirror (*Amor nello specchio*) concerns the preparation by a Commedia dell'Arte troupe in 17th-century Italy of an ambitious play, including potentially blasphemous scientific devices (magic lanterns, mirrors, and telescopes), which they plan to perform for the King of France in Paris. It is described as "a lavish, sexually explicit costume drama that moves between bawdy romp and a serious exploration of a rich theatrical tradition." Real Commedia dell'Arte theatres are used. (*Pulcinella*, adapted from a screenplay by Roberto Rossellini, was performed at the Théâtre du Rond Point, Paris, by Teatro Eliseo of Rome under the direction of Maurizio Scaparro this June. It likewise concerned a troupe of Commedia dell'Arte players who travel from Naples to Paris to perform at court, but would not otherwise seem to have much in common with the festival film. *Pulcinella* included excerpts from four famous farces.)

Festivals

UNIMA Congress and Festival, Magdeburg, 24 June– 2 July 2000, see page 16.

Learn from *Le petit TOONE ILLUSTRÉ* that Henrik Kemény, grandson of a 19th-century fairground puppeteer (see BrUNIMA Bulletin No. 100) will be performing "Ladislas the Brave" with the glove-puppet Vitéz László at the Toone theatre in Brussels 2, 3, and 4 December as part of Europalia 99 Hungaria.

Teatro del Carretto are presenting "Romeo e Giulietta" 2-7 November at the Riverside Studios, London, as part of an Italian Festival. Take a look at www.italianfestival.co.uk and the last *Newsletter*.

Thanks

In addition to thanks to all of this issue's contributors, belated ones to Dan Bishop for supplying me with a copy of the report he wrote for the PJF on his Russia trip as background for the Petrushka piece in the last issue.

Clarifications and Corrections

A member was quite right to take me to task for writing of "William Kentridge's Handspring Puppet Company," an unfortunate contraction in the course of editing of "William Kentridge and the Handspring Puppet Company." "Faustus in Africa," "Woyzeck on the Highveld," and "Ubu and the Truth Commission" are the result of a highly fruitful collaboration between the artist Kentridge and the company.

Housekeeping

Deadline for the next *Newsletter* is **20 November**, for the *Bulletin* **February 1**.

All the World's a Stage

Fancy a Victorian property in Teignmouth with five-bedrooms *and* a 30-seater theatre, complete with stage dressing room, ladies' and gentlemen's toilets, auditorium, and box office? If so, and you have around £250,000 to spare, contact Dart & Partners on 01626 772507.

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